



Public Utility Commission of Texas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

According to forecasts, the 2018 summer season in Texas is expected to be hotter than average, meaning higher electric bills for residential customers trying to beat the heat. Retail electric providers and utilities are often willing to work with customers struggling to pay their bills, but for those who need more help, the federal government has a \$3.68 billion Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Known in Texas as the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP), this allotment of federal dollars flows through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to their network of 37 non-profit subgrantees to eligible low-income households across the state.

Funded by Congress through Labor HHS Appropriations Bill, LIHEAP is operated by US Health & Human Services/Administration for Children & Families to provide assistance up to \$1,200 for utility costs, while some households may also be eligible to receive assistance for weatherization and/or crisis situations.

According to the LIHEAP allocation formula, Texas is projected to have 10.4 million households eligible for the program because they are making less than 150% of the federal poverty level (or \$37,650 annually for family of four). Households with seniors, persons with disabilities, or families with children under the age of 6 are given priority in the qualification process. In 2017, 2.5 million Texas households, (roughly 30% of all households) qualified, yet only 4% were able to be served with CEAP.

This year, Congress boosted program funding by more than 7% nationwide, increasing Texas' allotment by 29.6%, from \$106.7 million in FY 2017 to \$152 million in FY2018. As low-income Texans experience the higher bills during the summer cooling season, these funds could provide a critical safety net. Texans in need of utility assistance, may call 1-877-399-8939 in order to be routed to the nearest CEAP administrator for their area.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas is working to raise awareness of this resource through the press, industry groups, non-profits, and legislators.

